

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Mobridge - Pollock Middle School

MIDDLE SCHOOL

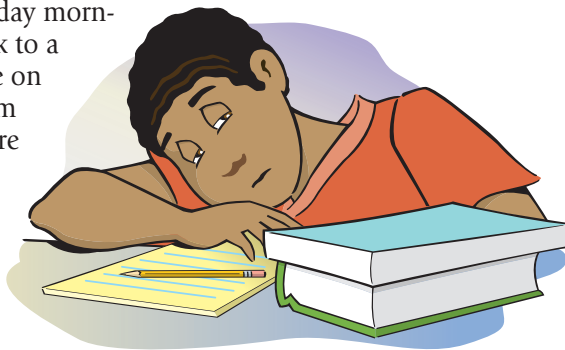


January 2013

The new year is the perfect time for your child to form new habits

Encourage your child to make New Year's resolutions related to:

- **Homework habits.** Did he spend the first semester scrambling to get his assignments finished each night? Help your child turn over a new leaf this semester. Set aside a specific time for studying each night and remind him to stay with it.
- **Setting goals.** Discuss what your child would still like to accomplish before the school year is over. Does he want to bring his science grade up to a B? Help him make a plan to reach his goals.
- **Weekends.** Does he stay up late every Friday and Saturday and then snooze away much of the next day? Does that make waking up for school a major struggle on Monday morning? Have your child stick to a more reasonable bedtime on weekends. It will help him start the school week more alert and ready to learn.
- **Test prep.** Cramming for exams is a bad idea. If this is your child's preferred way to study, something needs to change. This semester, have him study test material some each night in the week leading up to a test. He will likely see a payoff in his grades!



Commit to community service in 2013

Experts agree that students who participate in community service activities gain important real-life perspective that in turn improves student achievement. Here are some ideas for how your child can help others in the community:

- **Conduct a drive.** Canned food drives are a good standby, but other items are needed, too. A homeless shelter may need diapers or mittens. Residents might also need flip-flops to wear in the shower. Think about children who are in the hospital. Collect gently-used books, toys and DVDs to donate to the children's ward.
- **Help an older person.** It may be hard for an older neighbor to shovel snow or make it out to the mailbox in January weather. Your

child can also spend a few hours a week just keeping an older friend, neighbor or relative company.

- **Consider your child's loves.** If your child has always been interested in basketball, she might ask a coach if she can assist with younger children. If she likes board games, she could volunteer to play with children after school.

Source: Derry Cooperative School District, "Community Service Ideas!" www.derry.k12.nh.us/wrb/pdf/CommunityServiceIdeas.pdf.

Good nutrition can lead to better grades

Not everything your child needs for school is in his book bag—some are in his lunch bag. A healthful diet can help him stay sharp in class. Put pre-washed veggies and skim milk front and center in your fridge. Insist that he eat breakfast. Your child can't learn on an empty "fuel tank."



Keep your child motivated as the new year begins

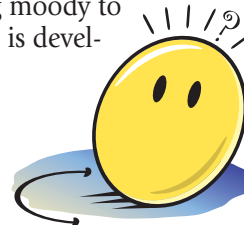
Many kids start running out of steam midway through the school year. To keep your child motivated:

- **Be available to listen.** In middle school things can go from *terrific* to *terrible* in the blink of an eye.
- **Help find an activity.** Feeling like she "belongs" can be just what your child needs to reenergize her for the rest of the year.
- **Offer incentives.** An occasional movie night may keep those "second-semester doldrums" at bay.

Moodiness is just a part of early teenage years

Middle school is a big change from elementary school: Your child is making new friends and she has harder classes. The middle school years are also a time of transformation from a happy-go-lucky elementary student to a sometimes-moody adolescent. Your child is not being moody to upset you. Instead, she is developing more complex:

- **Thinking.**
- **Emotions.**
- **Relationships.**



Source: K. Greder, "Parenting Young Teens," Iowa State University Extension, www.extension.iastate.edu/publications/pm1547e.pdf.

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How can I help my child solve a problem with a teacher?

Q: My child is having a problem with one of her teachers. She's constantly in trouble with her. What can I do to help my child and make sure she's being treated fairly?

A: Your daughter is about to learn one of the most valuable lessons she can learn in her life—how to get along with a boss she doesn't like. Tell your daughter that you understand that she has a problem with this teacher. But learning how to get along with difficult people is something she needs to do.

Remind her that you support her. But make it clear that you expect her to work out this problem with her teacher.

Encourage your child to ask her teacher if they can have a conference.

If the problem seems serious, you may want to join, as well. Make sure you hear the teacher's perspective, too—it may be different than what your daughter is telling you. Be sure the teacher knows you're there to talk about ways to work together to improve your daughter's performance in class.

Start from the position that you can't change the past. But you all need to figure out how you can work together in the future to help your daughter achieve in school.

It's okay to let your child complain a little at home. But let her know how proud you are that she's working things out with her teacher.



Is your child focusing on the future?

Your child is not quite ready to begin filling out college or job applications. But she should begin thinking about the future—and making good grades—now. Take this quiz to see if you are encouraging your child to plan. Answer *yes* for things you do often and *no* for things you do rarely or never.

- ___ **1. Do you encourage** your child to take courses that will challenge him, both now and when he goes to high school?
- ___ **2. Do you talk** with your child about what career he might like to have as an adult?
- ___ **3. Do you discuss** different post-high school options with your child, like college or trade schools?
- ___ **4. Do you tell** your child that you want him to gain the maximum education possible?
- ___ **5. Do you work** with your child to establish good study

habits now, knowing he will need these even more in the near future?

How well are you doing? *Mostly yes answers mean you and your child are preparing a firm foundation for his future education and work. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.*

"Parents who are afraid to put their foot down usually have children who tread on their toes."
—Chinese Proverb

Children enjoy reading more when *they* pick the book

Parents often complain that their children don't want to read—no matter how much they encourage them. But the truth may be that their children want to read—just not what parents think they should be reading.

Researchers found that children did far better on reading tests if they were given books to read—and were allowed to choose what they read! The message is that children, like most adults, want to read about what interests them.

Source: T. Parker-Pope, "Summer Must-Read for Kids? Any Book," August 2, 2010, The New York Times, <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/08/02/summer-must-read-for-kids-any-book/>.

Open communication lines

One way to get your child to open up is to simply spend time hanging out with her. This shows her that you can listen. And when she knows you'll listen, she'll talk—about school, her friends or anything else.

Hanging out time can include:

- **Cooking** together.
- **Doing** errands.
- **Going** for a walk.



Source: Palo Alto Medical Foundation, "Talking With Preteens," www.pamf.org/preteen/parents/talking.html.

Set boundaries for your child's independence

Most middle schoolers can handle short periods without adult supervision in certain situations. These freedoms mean your child also needs to abide by your family's rules. As you discuss rules, consider:

- **Safety.** Your child should never be in a situation where safety is in question.
- **Communication.** Your child must tell you where he's going and with whom.
- **Sleep.** Middle schoolers need at least nine hours of sleep a night to be well-rested for school the next day.

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